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ABSENTEEISM, NEGLECTED MACHINERY SLOW PRODUCTION IN HUNGARY

Comment: Shortly after the Hungarian government announced its new economic policy in July, absenteeism mounted, mine machinery was neglected or dismantled, and one local council openly thwarted the plans of a nearby state farm.

The following articles, taken from Hungarian daily newspapers, give data on absenteeism in some of the major plants during July, score the mines for neglecting machinery, and inform trade unions and managing cadres how to combat absenteeism despite the abolition of fines.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.]

Absenteeism Mounts

Two weeks after the official announcement of the new government program, a tour of inspection was made at the Rakosi Matyas Muvek Femuvei (Metalworks of the Matyas Rakosi Works). This particular plant was chosen because workers were consistently fined rather than educated, prior to the new program.

Although trade union and supervisory personnel claimed that morale had improved during the past 2 weeks, all shop statistics showed that there had been an increase in tardiness and absenteeism. There were 162 more hours of absenteeism in the plant during the first 20 days of July than during the first 20 days of June. Nearly 10 percent of the workers in the pipe and tube drawing shop were absent in July, and the situation was just as bad in the other shops. The light-metal foundry alone lost 352 working hours during the first 20 days of July.

Certain technical managers such as Gusztav Kiraly actually condone and assist the undisciplined workers by recommending that the lost time be recorded as paid leave.

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If undisciplined workers fail to respond to persuasion, the time missed should be deducted from regular leave, paid sick leave should be reduced by 50 percent for 2 years, and the supervisor has the right to demote such men or to assign them to corrective work shifts.(1)

Since July, when fines were abolished as a penalty, work discipline has been deteriorating at the No 24/1 Epitoipari Vallalat (Building Industry Enterprise). During May and June there were only 8 or 10 absentees per 10 days, but to date there have been 300 absentees in July. While the enterprise fulfilled the plan 119 percent in June, it will be a miracle if 100 percent is achieved in July.(2)

The Voros Csillag Traktorgyar (Red Star Tractor Factory) lost 1,804 hours of working time through absenteeism during the first 10 days in July. The steel foundry lost as much working time from 1-10 July as was lost in the entire month of June. During this same period the iron foundry and milling shop lost 28 and 30 work days, respectively. Discipline is poor throughout the factory. The workers arrive late and leave early. Supervisors no longer keep records of tardiness and absenteeism, and no one holds the workers responsible. Consequently, the factory is 27 percent short of fulfilling the plan. In the afternoon shift alone, there were 37 absentees on the last pay day in the steel foundry; on 13 July, only three out of 15 machine casters were at work in the iron foundry.

Trade union leaders are letting the whole matter slide and remain unmoved by the fact that 35 workers had left the plant up to 16 July.(3)

New Disciplinary Methods Suggested

Although the government has abolished fines as a means of enforcing work discipline, there are still many methods that can and should be used to correct unruly workers who will not respond to persuasion. Such workers can be demoted, deprived of special benefits, or fired. Although great care must be exercised in meting out punishment, since each case must be judged individually, supervisors should feel that they have the full support of the party and the government when they are enforcing discipline.

Furthermore, disciplinary measures must not be kept a secret; they should be made public so that both the offenders and their co-workers will learn from the example.(4)

Neglect Mine Machinery

The Annavolgyi Vallalat (Annavology Enterprise) of the Dorog Coal Trust, like other enterprises in the trust, fulfilled its July plan by only 76.6 percent.

Lajos Sardi, director of the enterprise, is also the chief engineer, mine foreman, district leader, etc. He feels that his many responsibilities justify completely his lack of haste in installing the conveyers which arrived several weeks ago. Consequently, the new scraper belts and shaker conveyers have been left in a heap out in the open, beside the railroad tracks. Sardi says he will arrange to have them brought in eventually.

Otto Kiraly, secretary of the League of Working Youth, is far too busy organizing the "Take good care of mining machinery" movement to consider the fate of the conveyers, which he trips over daily.(5)

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Dismantle Coal Cutters

Two P-4 coal cutters were sent to the mines at Varpalota. First, various parts disappeared from each machine, then each lost one of its seven motors, and finally the blades disappeared, whereupon the cutters were sent to a mining machine factory for repairs.

The factory was extremely puzzled by the request because the bill of lading listed the machines as coal cutters, although all that remained of them was a heap of scrap metal.(6)

Saboteurs Unmasked

Sandor Lorinc, cobbler of the Duna Cipogyar (Danube Shoe Factory), told his fellow workers that the country was in a state of confusion and spread misleading rumors about norm reductions. Convinced that in a few weeks his private trade would be returned to him, he persuaded a co-worker, the son of a former kulak, to hide the materials that were supposed to be delivered from the supply room so that work would be disrupted. Alert workers exposed the two saboteurs, who were dismissed instantly and will be prosecuted.(7)

Council Thwarts Beet Production

One of the brigades of the Sopron State Farms decided that it would increase the sugar beet yield from 125 to 400 quintals per cadastral yoke by watering the beet fields. However, the brigade has been finding itself thwarted on every hand. Although the beets are developing well and experts predict an average yield of at least 350 quintals per cadastral yoke, Dezso Bogнар, president of the city council, Dezso Mollai, director of the city council, and Comrade Bencsik /fnu/, head of the city bathing enterprise, spread the rumor that the state farm is deceiving the state. They contended that making the beets grow larger decreases their sugar content.

Kalman Kerek, chief agronomist of the state farm, was able to counter these rumors with facts and figures. Nevertheless, when it came time to water the beet fields again, the city council convened and, under the pretext of discussing questions of public sanitation, moved that the state farm should be forbidden to water its beets from spring-fed mill ponds it had used before. The reason given was that the water supply would become depleted and muddy, thereby ruining the city bathing beach. Although this is a false premise, since the water supply of the ponds is more than replenished by the natural springs and the state farm was planning to take only a little water per day in any case, the motion was carried and the council has forbidden the brigade to water the beets.(8)

SOURCES

1. Nepszava, 25 Jul 53
2. Ibid., 26 Jul 53
3. Ibid., 30 Jul 53
4. Szabad Nep, 22 Aug 53
5. Szabad Ifjusag, 2 Aug 53
6. Ibid., 17 Jul 53
7. Nepszava, 22 Jul 53
8. Ibid., 25 Aug 53

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